

eCitizenship at Missouri State: The Relationship Between Social Media Usage and Civic Engagement Among Students

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The American Democracy Project

- **The American Democracy Project (ADP)** is a multi-campus initiative focused on higher education's role in preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy. The project began in 2003 as an initiative of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), in partnership with *The New York Times*.

ADP's eCitizenship Initiative

- This three-year initiative is a partnership of AASCU and the Center for the Study of Citizenship at Wayne State University. The participating thirty-five institutions in this initiative work together to study how emerging technologies, particularly social networks, support and facilitate civic and political engagement. The main goal of the initiative to provide insights into and strategies for engaging undergraduates in the use of social networks and technology tools for civic purposes. Those strategies can then be broadly employed to prepare undergraduates for lives of engagement and participation.

eCitizenship at Missouri State

- The MSU eCitizenship study is a collaboration with university students, faculty, and staff:
 - MSU eCitizenship Advisory Committee
 - eCitizenship Survey
 - Focus Groups



Goals

- To utilize social networking technology as a means for developing civic skills and enhancing civic engagement by:
 - Developing critical and knowledgeable consumers of digital information and media.
 - Developing citizenship skills that translate social networks into resources for community mobilization and empowerment.
 - ethical leadership
 - cultural competence
 - community engagement

Data Collection and Community Input

- Collaboration with students and faculty:
 - eCitizenship Survey
 - Focus Groups
 - Presentations, University Forums, and Town Halls



Survey

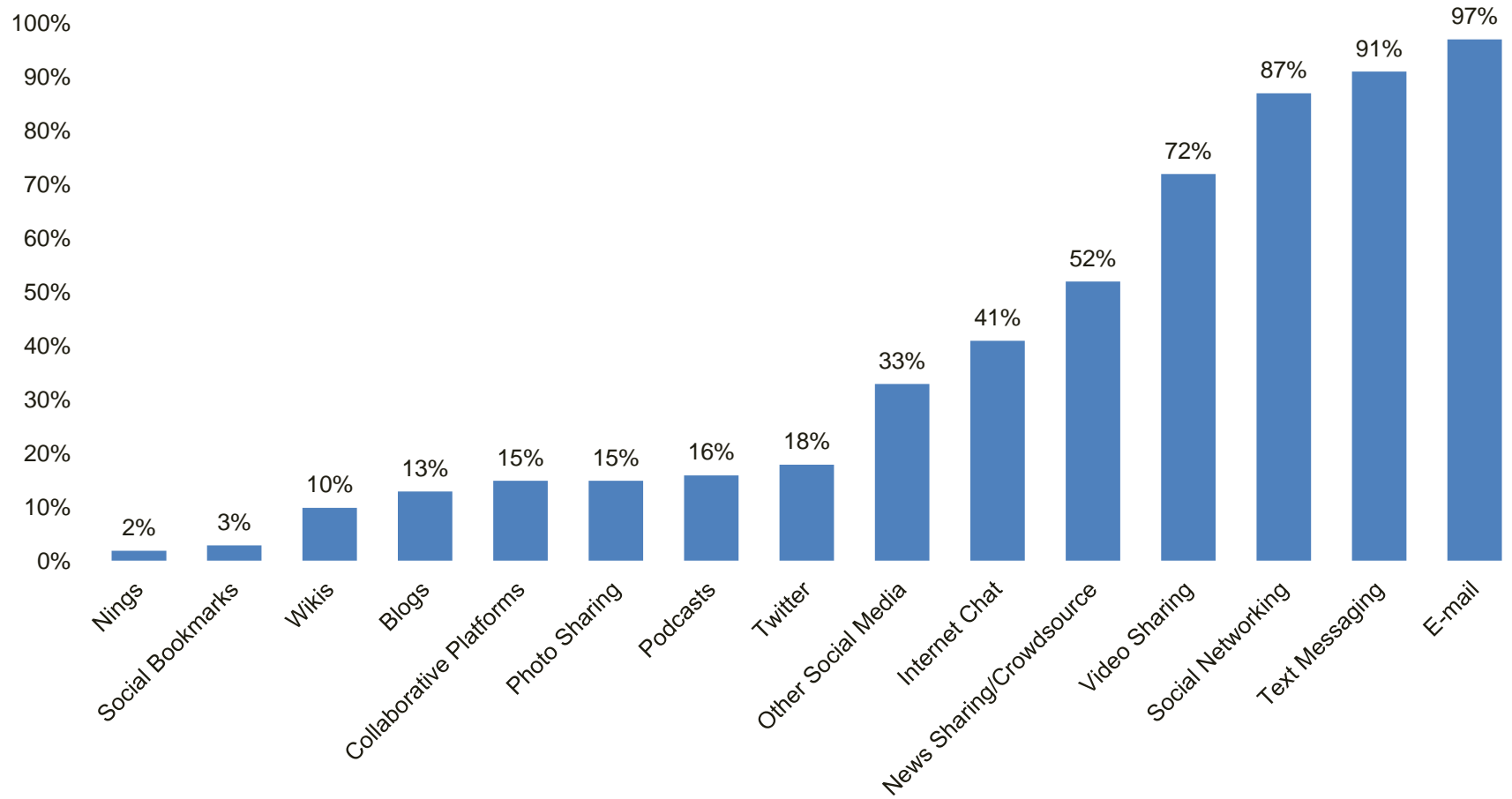
- Measures:
 - Social media usage (Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, etc.)
 - Social capital (networks of trust and reciprocity)
 - Civic engagement (online and face-to-face)
 - Electoral and non-electoral political participation
 - Community involvement
 - Public affairs scale (ethical leadership, cultural competence, community engagement)

Sample

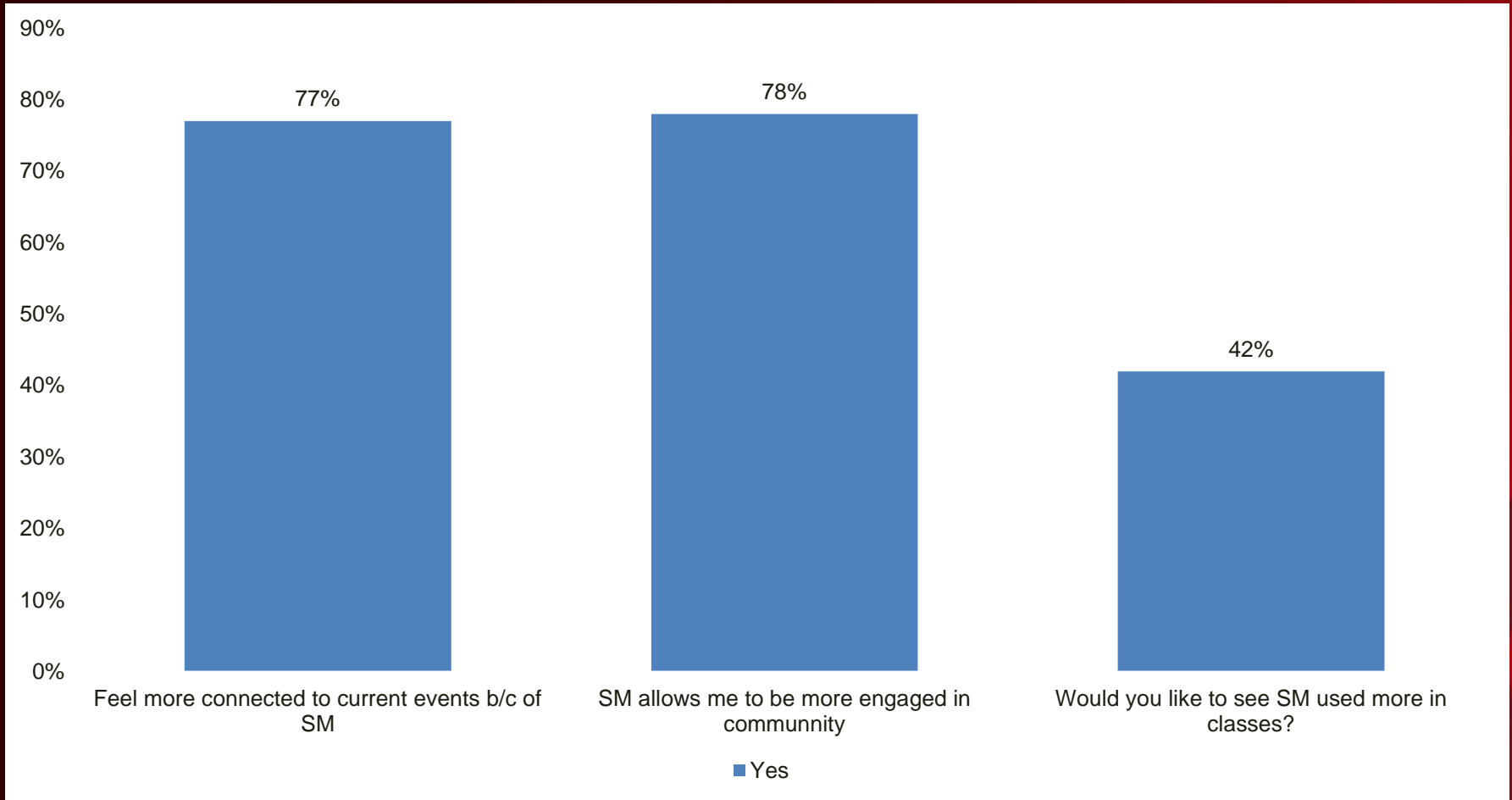
- 584 MSU undergraduates (main campus)
- Median age = 21 years
 - Ranges from 18-65
- Gender:
 - 72% female
 - 28% male
- Race:
 - 87% White
 - 3% Black
 - 3% Hispanic/Latino
 - 5 % Asian



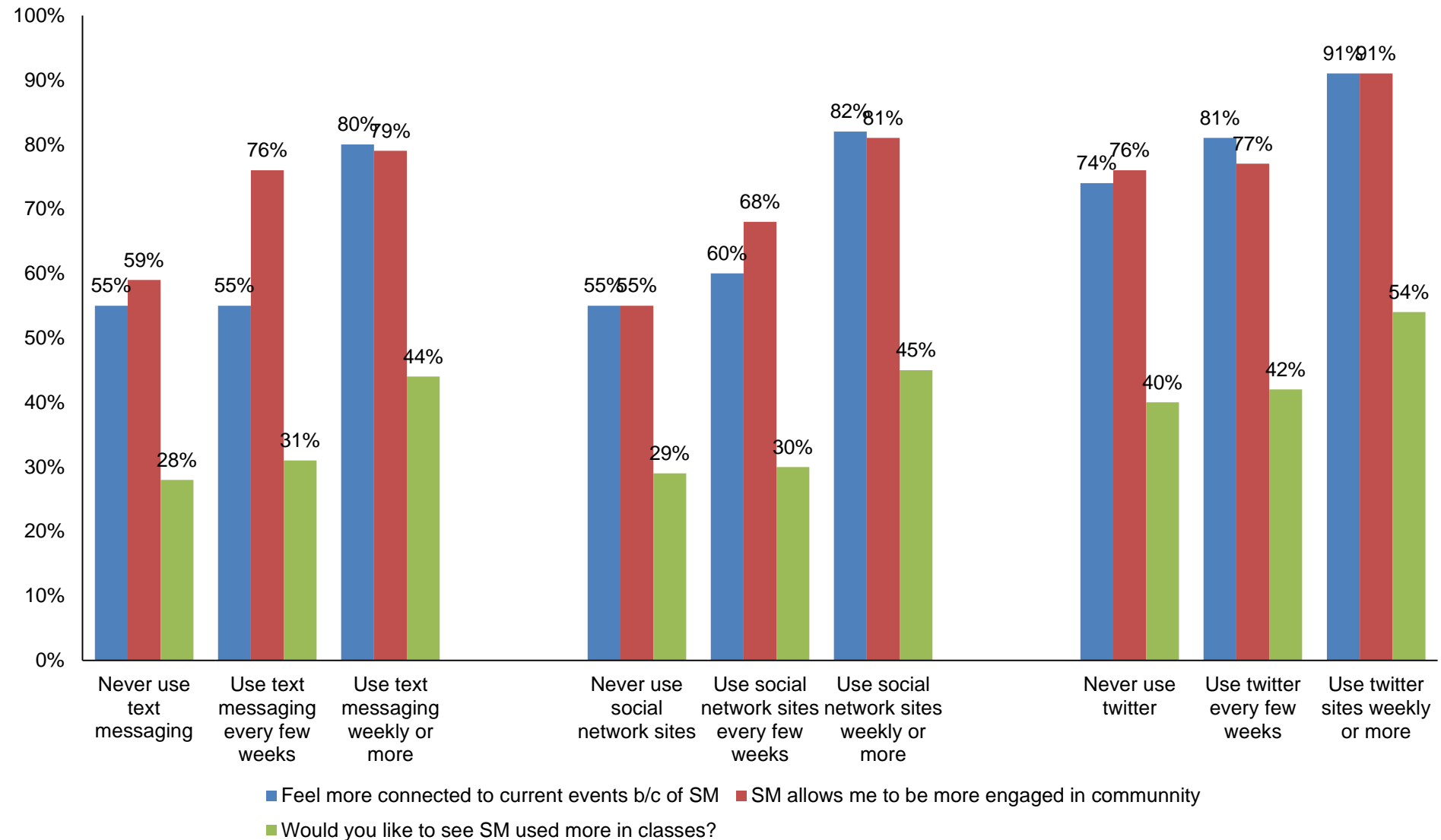
Student Social Media Usage: Every Few Weeks or More



Student Social Media Usage: Attitudes

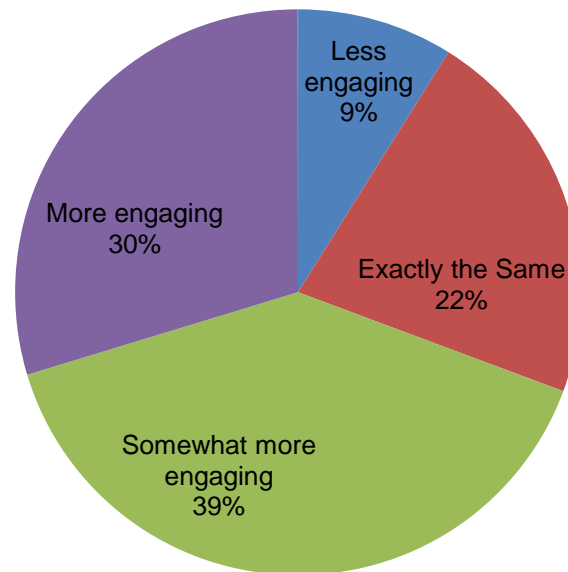


Student Attitudes by Frequency of Social Media Use



Social Media Used in Classes

If your professor uses social media, do you find the class to be more engaging?

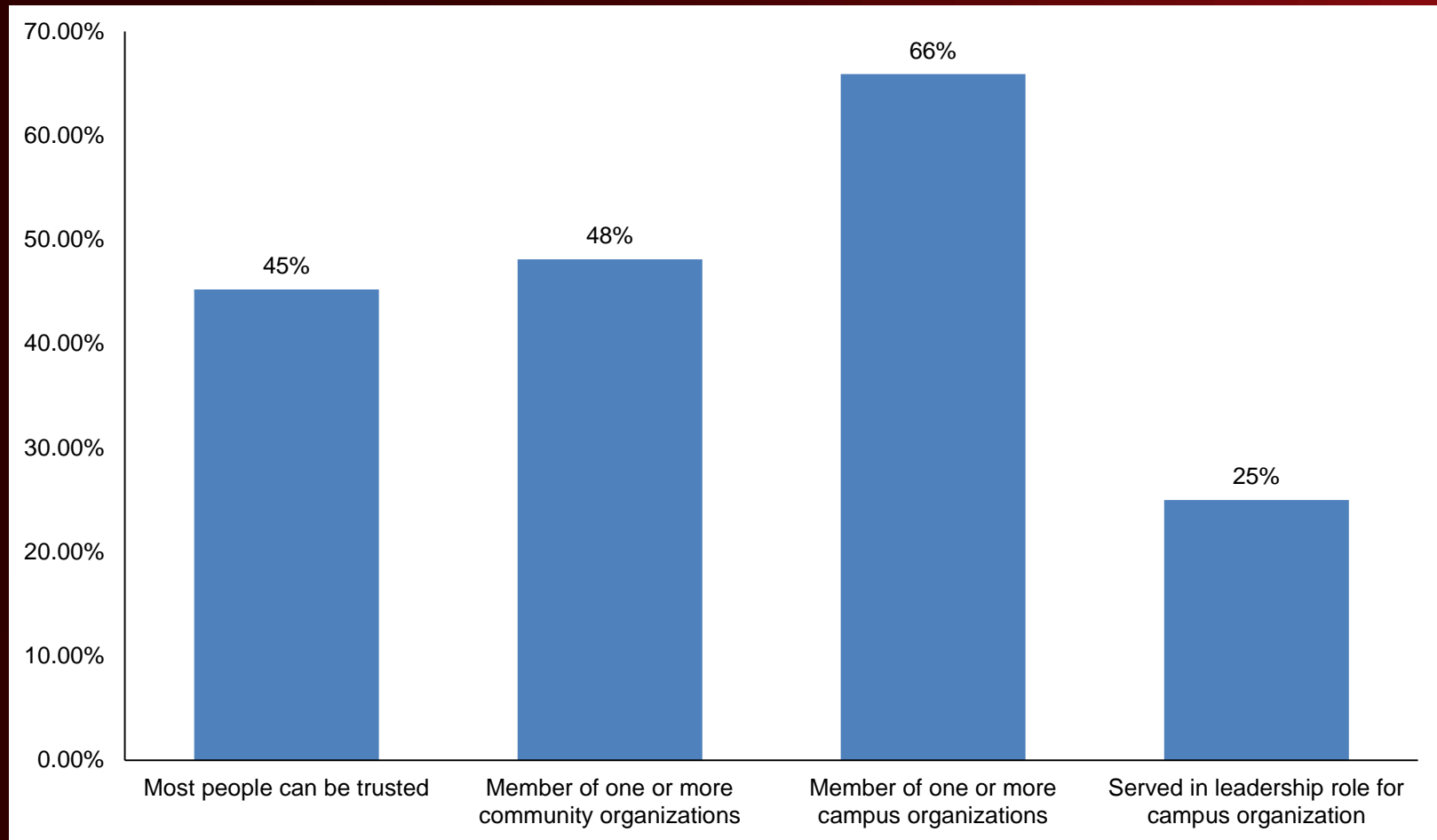


Social Capital

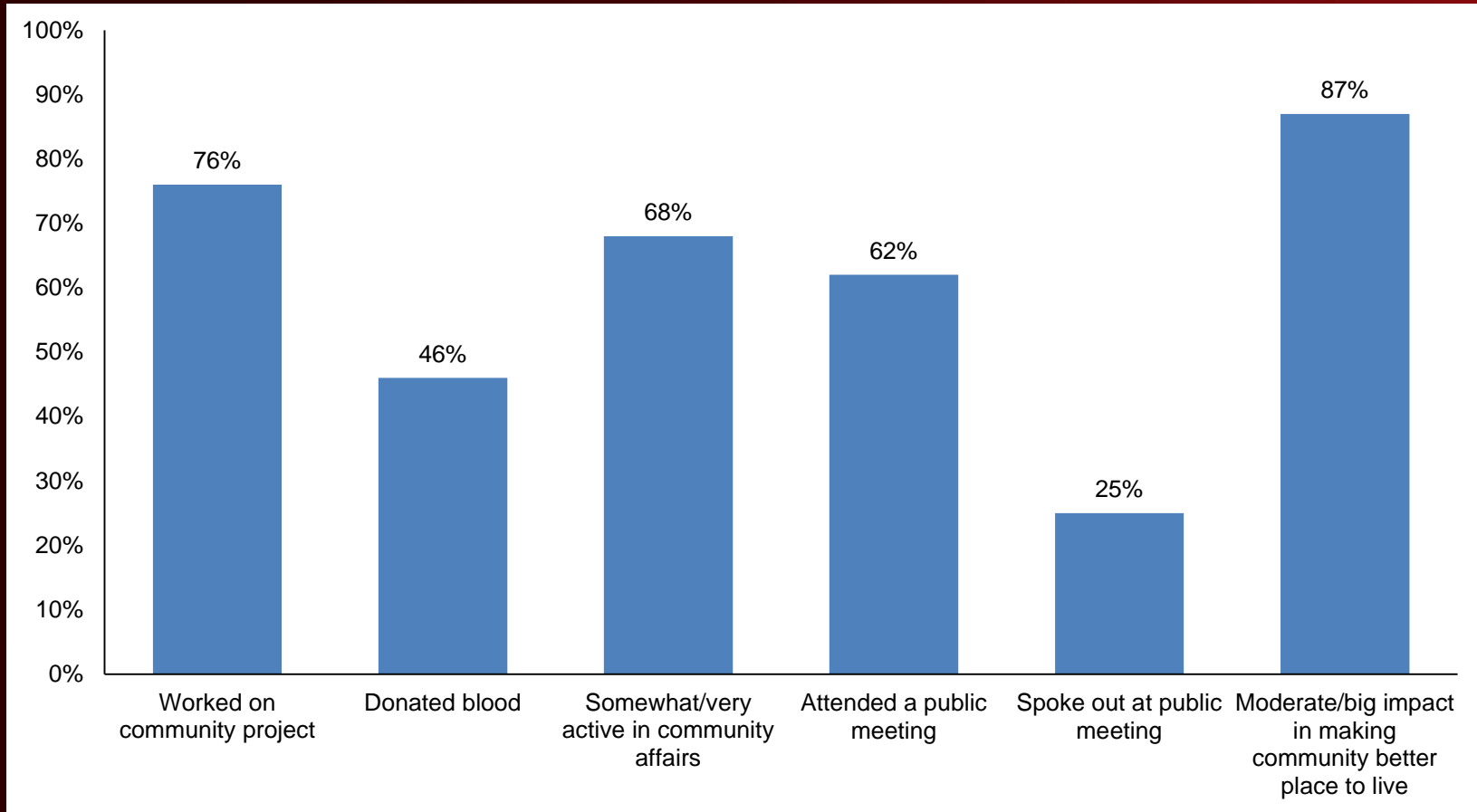
- **Social capital** = resources accessible through *social networks* characterized by *norms of trust* and reciprocity
- Benefits individuals and communities
- Key feature of civil society
- There are different types, differentiated by the structure of social networks



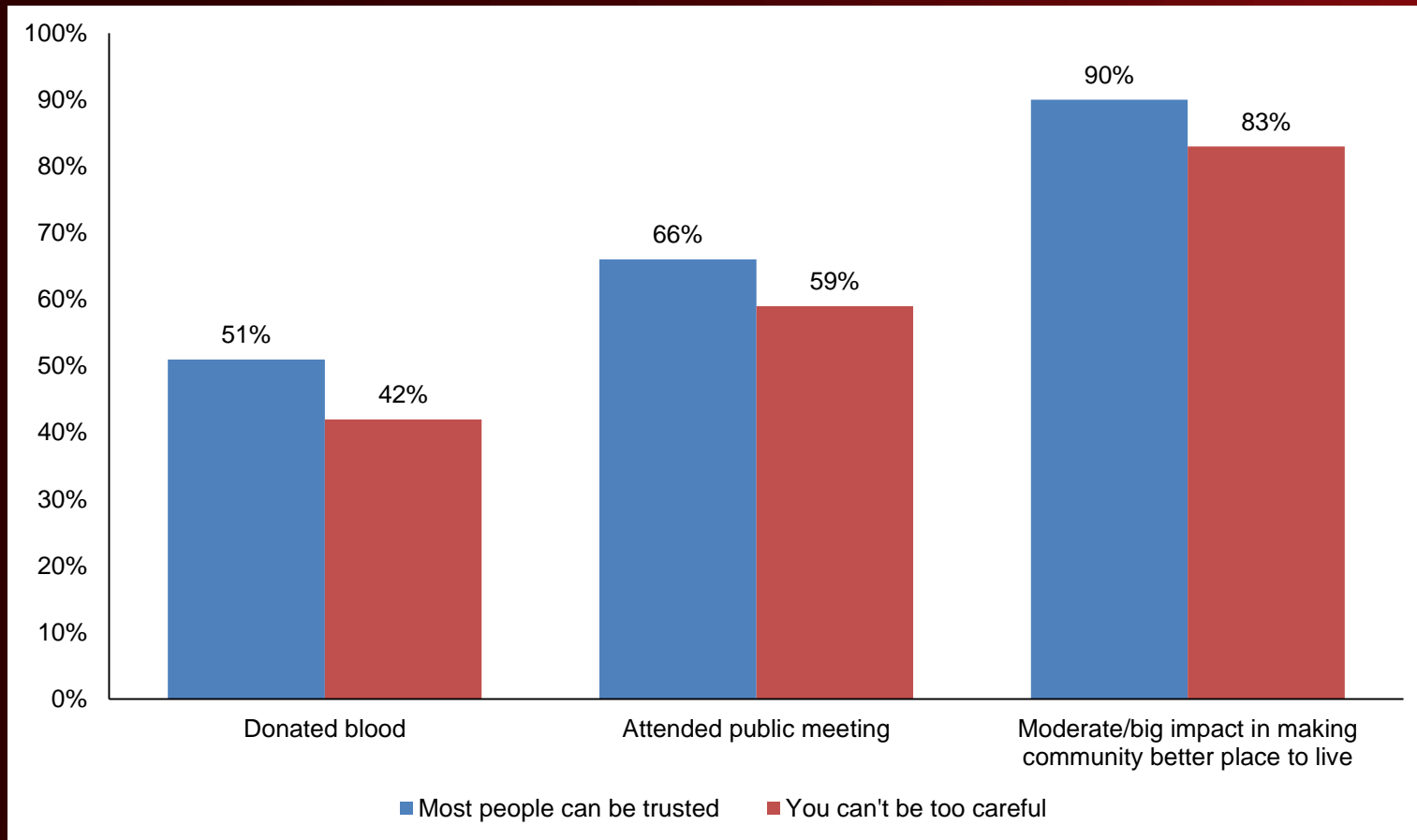
Student Social Capital



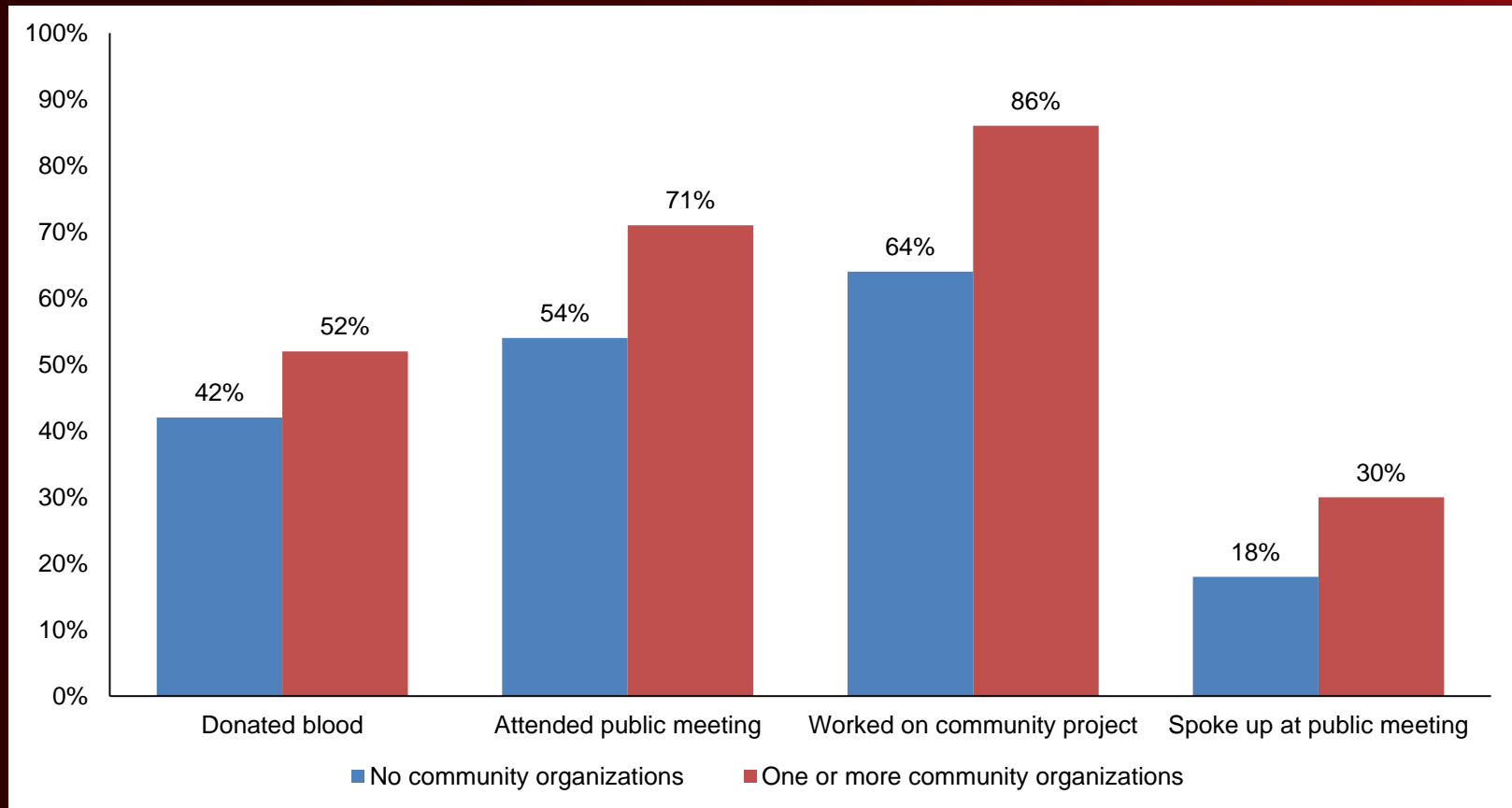
Student Civic Engagement



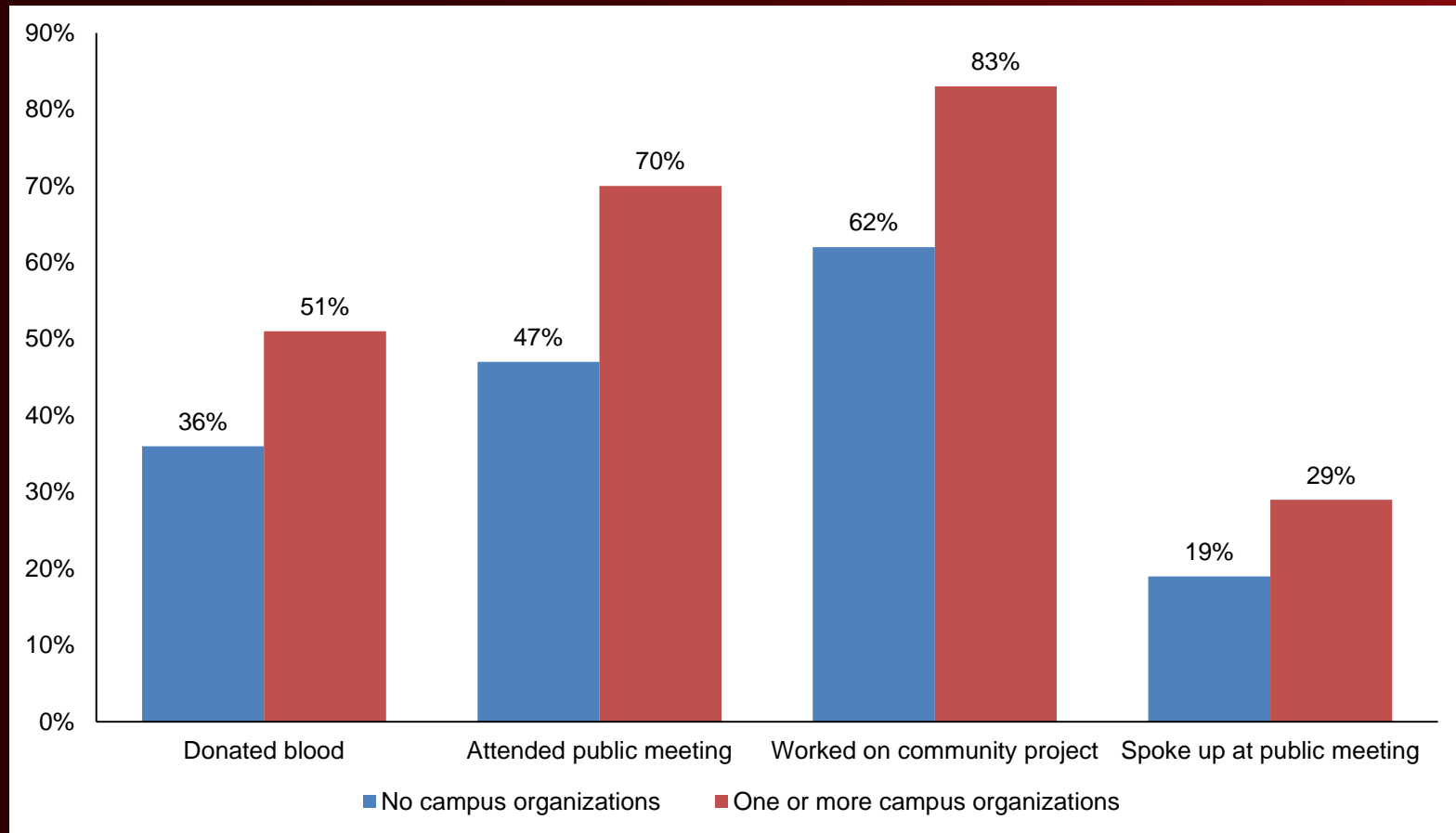
Social Capital and Civic Engagement



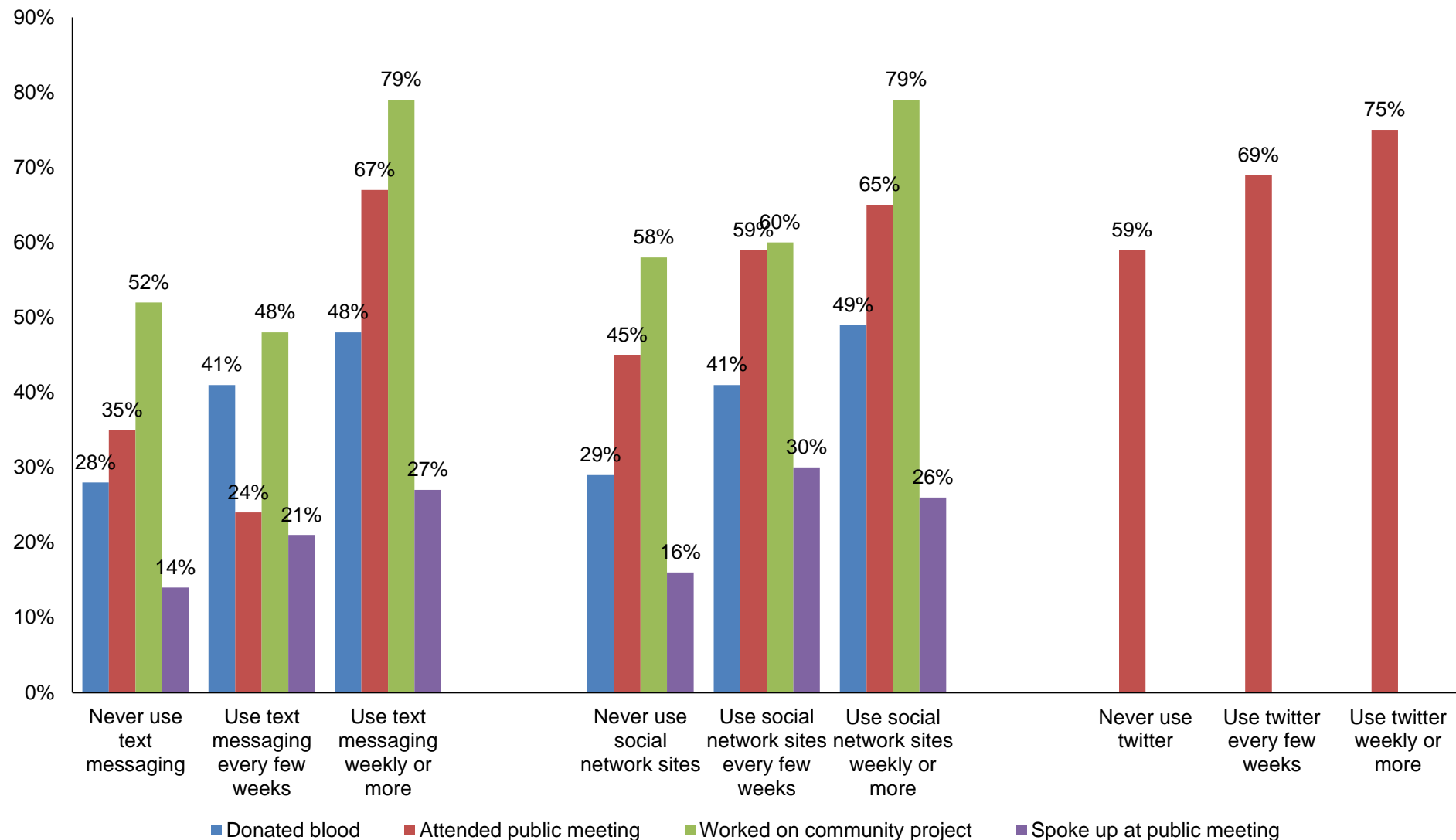
Social Capital and Civic Engagement



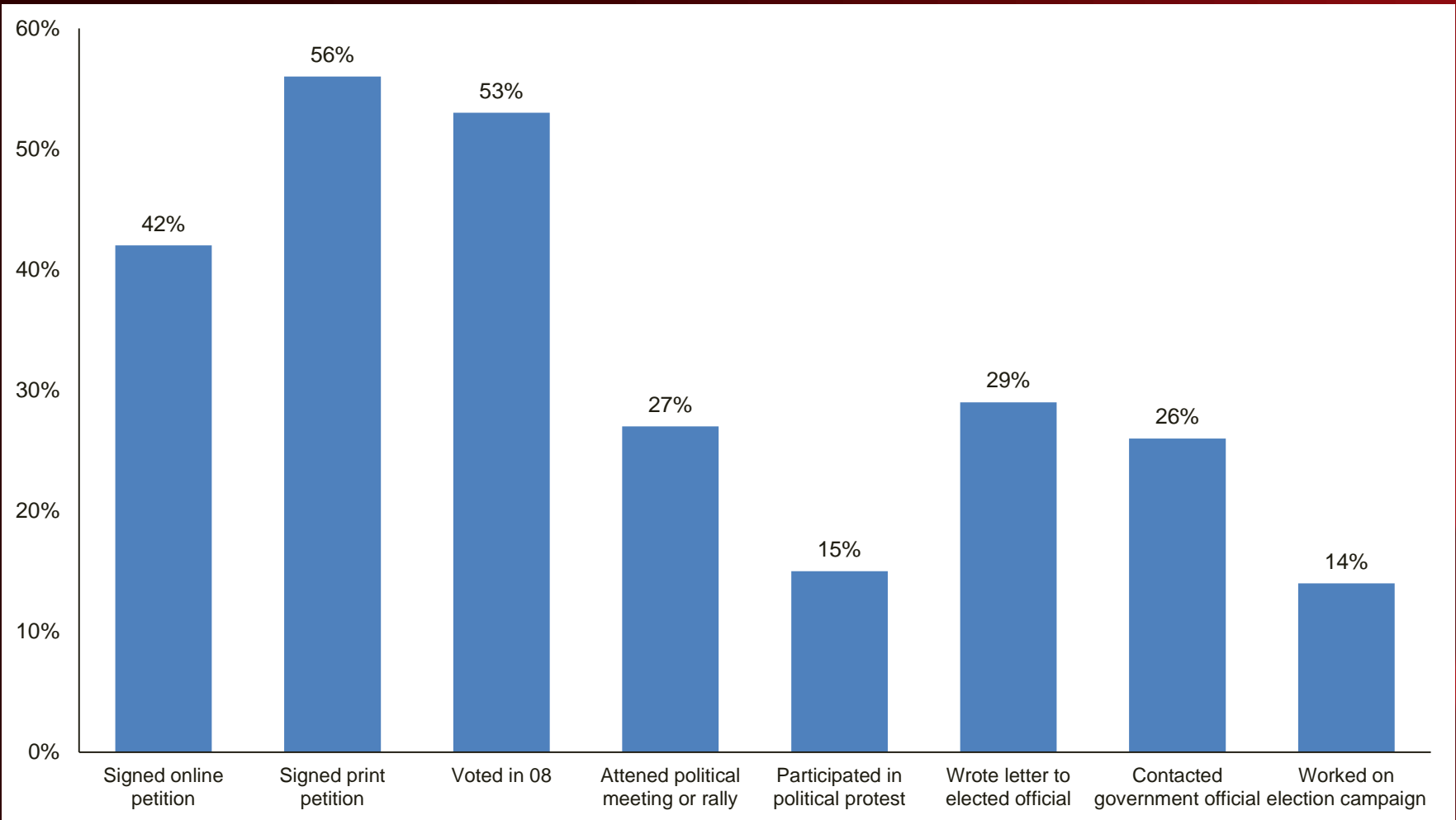
Social Capital and Civic Engagement



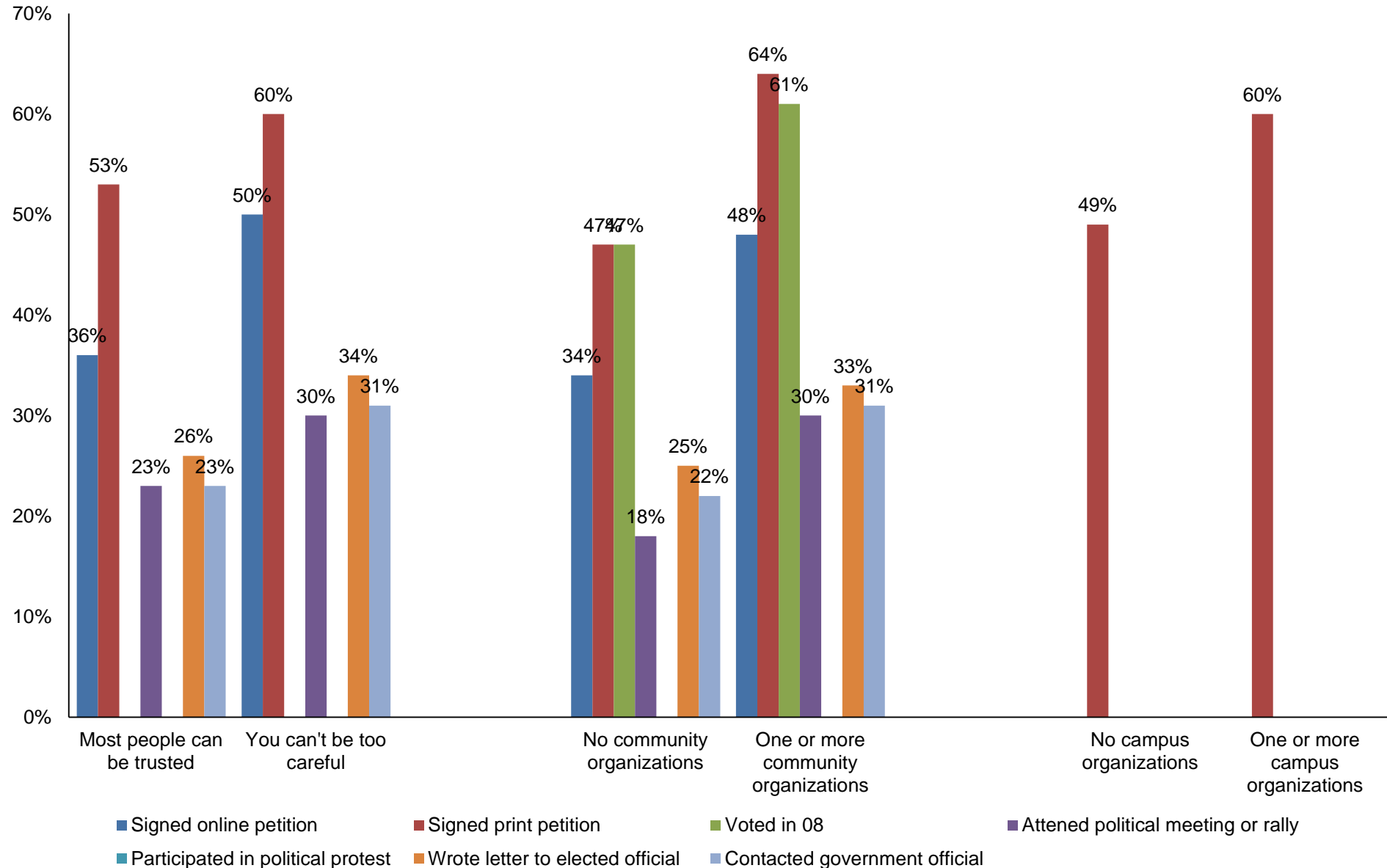
Social Media Usage and Civic Engagement



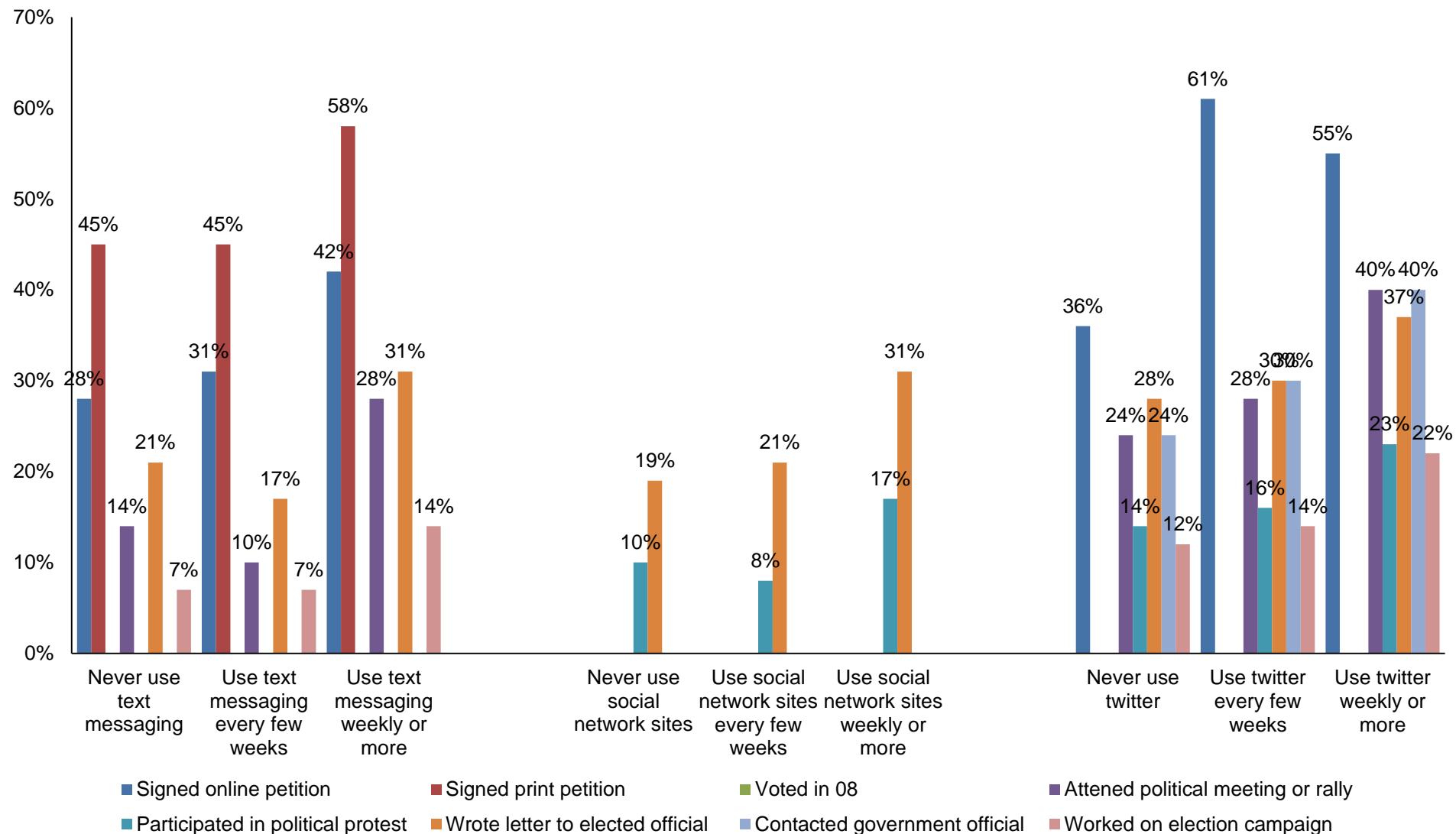
Student Political Participation



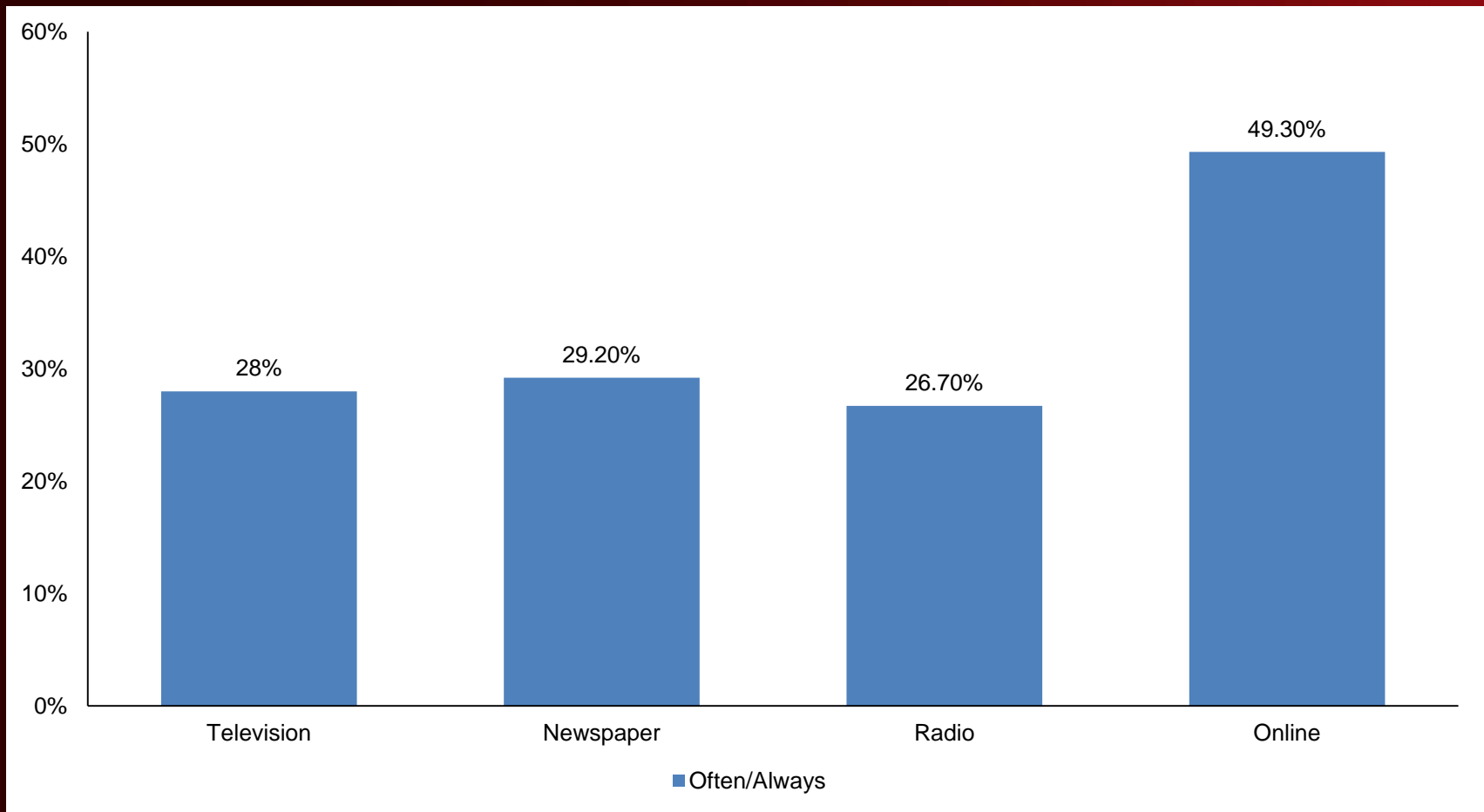
Social Capital and Political Participation



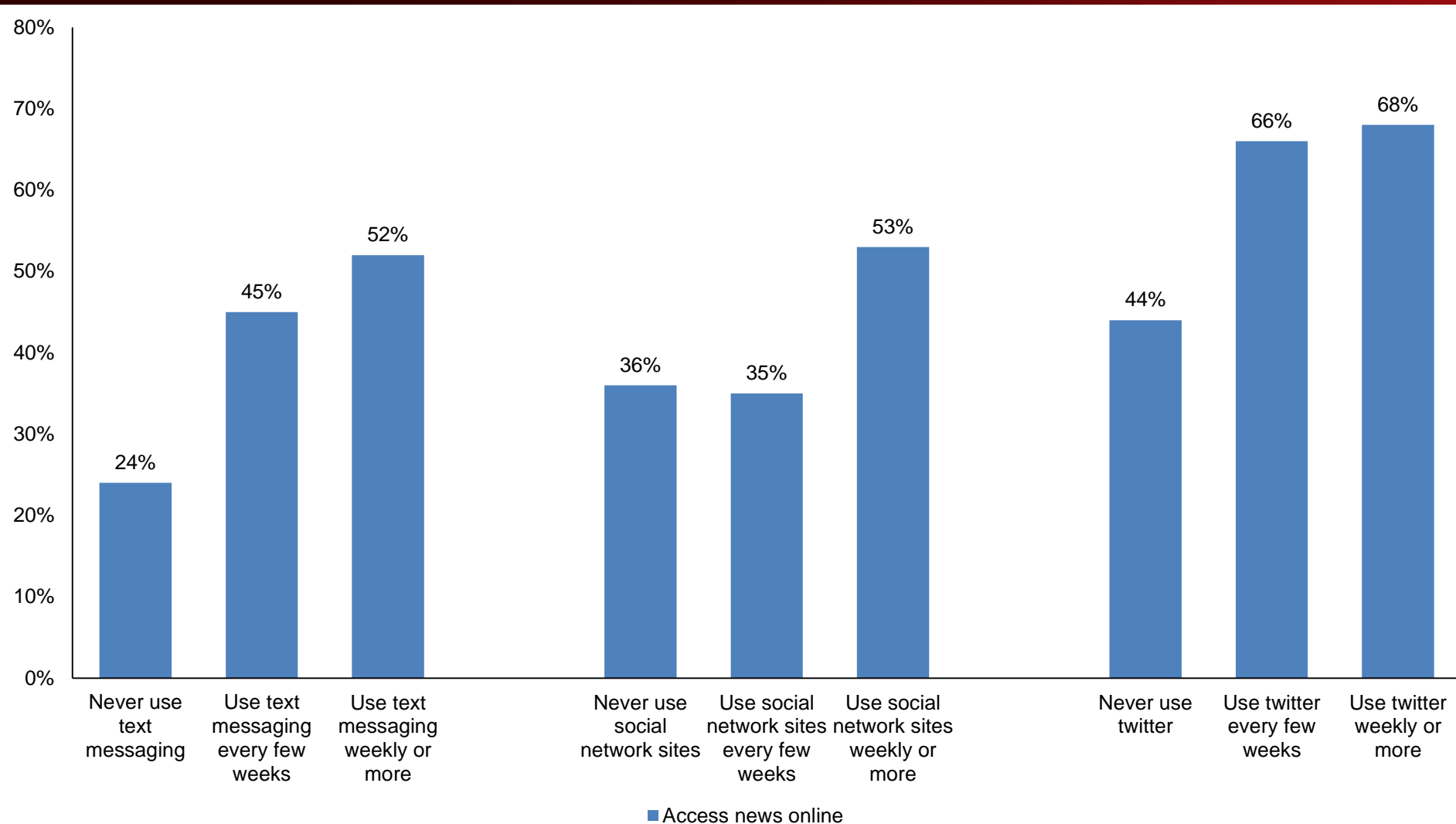
Social Media Usage and Political Participation



Student Access to News and Current Events



Student Access to News Online by Social Media Usage



Summary: Student Social Media Usage

- Social media technology usage is ubiquitous on campus
 - E-mail, SMS, Facebook, and YouTube most popular
- Students feel more connected and engaged with community issues because of social media technologies
- Students who use social media most often are most likely to say they'd like to see it used more often in their classes
- Nearly 2/3 of respondents said that the use of social media in classes made the class more engaging

Summary: Student Civic Engagement

- Students appear to be highly active on campus and in their communities
- Civic engagement was highest for students with more trust, and for students who participate in voluntary associations on campus and in the local community
- Frequent users of social media (esp. SMS & Facebook) were more likely to be civically engaged than less frequent users
 - Students who use twitter frequently were more likely to attend public meetings than less frequent twitter users

Summary: Student Political Participation

- Most common political activities are signing petitions and voting, but relatively large numbers are also active in other ways
- Students who are more trusting and who participate in voluntary associations are more likely to participate in politics
 - Membership in campus organizations is not related to most types of political participation (only signing print petitions)
- Frequent users of twitter are more actively involved in politics than frequent users of SMS or facebook

Summary: Access to News and Information

- Nearly half (49%) of students reported that they primarily get their news and information online
- The likelihood of accessing news and information online increases with the frequency of social media usage



Future Research

- Explore the connection between social capital and social media
- Explore the quality of information and news obtained online vs. more traditional sources
- Collect longitudinal data to track how social media usage is changing over time
- Explore best practices for using social media to increase student engagement in classes, on campus, and in the community

Questions?

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